



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park

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Grand Canyon News Release

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Grand Canyon National Park's historic Hermit Road to be rehabilitated this spring *Alternate transportation and recreational opportunities available for park visitors during construction activities*

Grand Canyon, Ariz. – Grand Canyon National Park's historic Hermit Road will be rehabilitated this spring. Hermit Road is located on the park's South Rim between Grand Canyon Village and Hermits Rest. The project is expected to begin in February and be completed by the end of November 2008.

Hermit Road is a popular roadway and destination for South Rim visitors and includes nine overlooks, access to the historic Hermits Rest and Hermit Trailhead, seven miles of improved and unimproved rim trails, and many popular spots for viewing sunset. Normally, visitors use a free shuttle bus service provided by the National Park Service (NPS) to travel Hermit Road from March 1 through November 30. During the winter months (December 1 through February 29), Hermit Road is accessible by private vehicle. Commercial tours are also provided year-round on Hermit Road by Xanterra South Rim, LLC (Xanterra).

The Santa Fe Railway constructed the first road to Hermits Rest in the early years of the last century. The Bureau of Public Roads and the NPS designed and constructed the current road between 1934 and 1935. It is now in poor condition and does not meet current safety standards. The 18 to 20-foot-wide road is too narrow for safe bus passage, especially when bicyclists and pedestrians are using the road. Although the road has received some periodic maintenance, the pavement is in poor condition because the road was not built for the size of vehicles and volume of traffic it receives today.

The rehabilitation of Hermit Road includes road widening and resurfacing to a consistent width of 24 feet, improvements to shuttle bus stops at each of the overlooks, provision of accessible pedestrian routes from shuttle bus stops to viewing areas, and improvements to approximately five miles of rim trails, including construction of a new three-mile, multi-use greenway trail which will be open to both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Construction activities on Hermit Road start in February 2008; however, visitors will continue to have access to the entire length of the road, including overlooks and Hermits Rest, during February and March. Beginning April 1, 2008, Hermit Road will be closed to all vehicles from

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Hopi Point west to Hermits Rest to allow for construction on the western end of the road. In addition, the Rim Trail, which runs parallel to Hermit Road, will be closed from Hopi Point to Hermits Rest. Pedestrians will not be allowed to walk along any portion of either the road or the Rim Trail between Hopi Point and Hermits Rest. During this time, the road will remain open from Hopi Point, east to where Hermit Road intersects with Village Loop Road and will continue to be served by the park's free shuttle system. Beginning July 7, the entire length of Hermit Road will be closed to all vehicles from the Hermit Road intersection west to Hermits Rest. Starting at this time, the Rim Trail will be closed from the first Trailview Overlook west to Hermits Rest. As needed temporary closures may need to occur between the Hermit Road intersection and first Trailview Overlook for construction activities.

Access to the Hermit Trailhead will be limited from April 1 through the end of November 2008 (or until completion of construction activities). Day hiking will not be allowed on the Hermit Trail during this time period. Visitors who have obtained an overnight backcountry permit from the park's Backcountry Information Center (BIC) for backcountry use areas reached by the Hermit Trail will only be allowed access to the trailhead during the months of April, May, September, October, and November. No access will be permitted to the trailhead during the months of June, July and August. During the months that Hermit Trail is accessible, backcountry permit holders will only be allowed to hike down the Hermit Trail; an alternate trail must be used to hike out.

To help reduce impacts caused by these construction activities, the NPS will provide early morning free shuttle service to the Hermit Trailhead for use only by overnight backcountry permit holders during months when the trail is useable. The approximate shuttle schedule will be as follows:

- April 1 – 30: shuttle buses will leave the BIC
At 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.
- May 1 – 31: shuttle buses will leave the BIC at 4:30 a.m. and 5:30 a.m.
- September – November 30: shuttle buses will leave the BIC each morning; times to be determined.

For additional trail access and hiking information visit the park's Web site at <http://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/backcountry.htm> or contact NPS rangers at the Backcountry Information Center at 928-638-7875 Monday through Friday (except holidays) between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. MST.

During the closure of Hermit Road, the NPS recommends the following recreational opportunities for day hiking:

- Visitors can enjoy rim hikes of up to 6 miles along the Rim Trail from Hopi Point, (April 1 – July 6) or from the first Trailview Overlook (July 7 – November 30) east to Pipe Creek Vista. This paved rim trail can be reached at several parking lots and up to six bus stops served by the free shuttle bus system.
- Visitors can also enjoy day hikes below the rim using the Bright Angel and South Kaibab Trails. The free shuttle buses transport visitors to these trailheads.

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From July 7 through September 5, 2008, during which time the entire length of Hermit Road is closed, a new shuttle bus route from Canyon View Information Plaza to Desert View will be added so visitors can continue to enjoy the park utilizing the free shuttle bus system. This route will stop at several scenic locations along Desert View Drive (Highway 64) including Grandview Point, Tusayan Ruin and Museum, Moran Point, and Desert View. Visitors will be able to use all other roadways within the park that are normally open to private vehicles.

Xanterra will continue to provide commercial bus tours on Hermit Road, including those provided to passengers of the Grand Canyon Railway, but they will be modified depending on construction activities and closures. Beginning April 1, the tours will not travel past Mohave Point. Beginning July 7, when the entire Hermit Road is closed, tours provided to Grand Canyon Railway passengers will include stops at Yavapai Observation Station, Yaki Point, and Duck on a Rock. From April 1 through the completion of construction, Xanterra will continue to run daily commercial tours to Desert View and will add tours to its schedule as needed to provide maximum service to park visitors. For more information about guided bus tours on the South Rim, contact Xanterra at 928-638-2631.

The park's free shuttle bus operations, including alternative routes and schedules, and information on alternative visitor activities available during the reconstruction project, will be posted on the park's Web site at <http://www.nps.gov/grca/> and will be listed in *The Guide*, the park's free newspaper distributed to all visitors.

Additional information can also be obtained by visiting the park's Web site listed above or by calling 928-638-7888. Information on hiking and trailhead access is available by calling the BIC at 928-638-7875, Monday through Friday (except holidays) between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. MST or visiting the backcountry information Web site at <http://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/backcountry.htm>.

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